



## THE COMPELLING COMMUNITY

A CULTURE OF SPIRITUALLY INTENTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS | MARCH 1, 2026

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### INTRODUCTION

In God's sight, not all church activity carries equal \_\_\_\_\_. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul uses the image of a farmer to describe the process of planting a church (v. 6). Then, as Paul transitions to the image of a builder to describe the growth of this church, it becomes clear that some church activity counts as worthless (10-15).

On the last day, God will reveal every action and word for its true value (Matthew 12:36). Despite the best of motives, some church activity will be judged as worthless. We can be consumed with activity, but that activity can be a \_\_\_\_\_ for the works-based person to take shelter from the gospel. We need to make sure that our activity is Word-based and profitable.

### VALUE IN RELATIONSHIPS

So where can we invest to bring about eternally lasting fruit? We can invest in spiritually \_\_\_\_\_ relationships.

- Love for other Christians shows us to be true \_\_\_\_\_ (1 John 2:10-11).
- Love for other Christians demonstrates the \_\_\_\_\_ of the gospel (John 13:35).
- Love for other Christians makes an eternally rewarding \_\_\_\_\_ (Luke 16:9).
- Love for other Christians is a major way that we live out the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

As a general rule, church activity that builds into relationships will last; activity that doesn't, won't. After all, the \_\_\_\_\_ of people will live forever; everything else will pass away. Exceptions to this rule are the infrastructure we erect to support the relational work of the church.

In the church, we want to see relationships where it is \_\_\_\_\_ to talk about spiritual things. Not where conversation is never about baseball or kids or politics — but where a conversation with no spiritual grounding is unusual. We'll talk about 3 strategies to foster this culture.

#### 1. Advocate for \_\_\_\_\_ and informal relationships.

The New Testament authors repeatedly describe two different types of relationships between Christians. First, they describe mentoring/\_\_\_\_\_ relationships. These are aimed at doing another person spiritual good and helping in spiritual growth. Paul's care for Timothy and Jesus' care for His disciples are prime examples.

Second, numerous passages encourage Christians to show each other \_\_\_\_\_ — both to strengthen the local church (Romans 12:13) and to support gospel workers (3 John 8). These two relational models are simple to grasp, simple to communicate, and simple to pass along.

Discipling — Encourage church members to meet together with other members on a regular basis to read a Christian book together, to study a book of the Bible together, or simply to encourage each other's spiritual life. Though discipling relationships may seem \_\_\_\_\_ at first, over time intentionality and spiritual focus become natural.

Hospitality — Our culture defines hospitality very narrowly: "invite people over for dinner." But the New Testament use of the word is much \_\_\_\_\_: "lover of strangers." Inviting people out for a meal, walking up to a stranger at church to say hello, and attending the wedding of a church member you don't know — all of these are hospitality.

## 2. Advocate for lives centered on the \_\_\_\_\_.

A quick skim through the New Testament leaves the unambiguous impression that the local church is exceedingly \_\_\_\_\_ in God's economy.

- It makes His gospel \_\_\_\_\_ (John 13:35).
- It protects the \_\_\_\_\_ of our faith (Galatians 6:1-2).
- It safeguards us from \_\_\_\_\_ (1 Corinthians 5:4-5).
- It grows us in \_\_\_\_\_ (Hebrews 10:23-25).

A life centered on the community of the local church is significantly more likely to be lived strategically in God's sight than a life where the local church languishes as a peripheral detail.

A typical Christian will make more of his life for Christ if he prioritizes his ability to \_\_\_\_\_ in the local church when making career decisions, housing decisions, recreation decisions, etc.

## 3. Emphasize the privileges of church \_\_\_\_\_.

The pattern of this world is to commit only after we feel comfortable. But church membership tells us to commit to a body of believers simply because we're \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ — even if we hardly know them.

As is true in marriage, true love in the church thrives on \_\_\_\_\_. The covenant of church membership is the ecosystem in which a relationship-focused church culture can thrive. Membership, as a formal recognition of all the commitments Christians make to others in the local church, is vital to the Christian life.

There is no necessary \_\_\_\_\_ between reaching the lost with the gospel and drawing clear boundaries between those inside and outside the church. In fact, the surest path to evangelistic witness is exclusivity. As this love within the family of faith burns brightly, it becomes a primary witness to the truth of the gospel (Galatians 6:10; John 13:35; Eph. 3:10).

We must believe that God's plan for reaching the lost is for local churches to burn brighter and hotter, and that the exclusivity that fuels a blazing hot community of believers can do far more gospel work than watering down the breadth and depth of commitment to feel more inclusive.

As the importance of membership increases in a church, commitment grows, relationships flourish, and the church becomes more \_\_\_\_\_ to those looking in from the outside.